

272 EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST, AND
EEFOEMEE

So long as the present prosecution was in the hands of the fanatics who initiated "The Maiden Tribute" of "The Pall Mall Gazette," and whose mouthpieces in both Houses of Parliament have gulled the Legislature with cock and bull sensational stories of there being ten houses in a single London street where young girls are accommodated with private rooms and supplied with indecent books for perusal, . . . so long as the prosecution remained in those hands, I was content to leave the decision to the sound common-sense of an English jury. JSTow, however, that the Government has thought proper to throw its weight into the scale, with the view of suppressing "a class' of books which the law has never previously interfered with — otherwise the works I have quoted from could only be issued in secret and circulated by stealth — circumstances are changed, and I ask for my own and other publishers' guidance whether, if Zola's novels are to be interdicted, "Tom Jones" and "Boderick Random," "Moll Flanders" and "The Country Wife," "The Maid's Tragedy" and "The Eelapse," in all of which the grossest passages are to be met with will still be allowed to circulate without risk of legal proceedings.

In the Extracts now submitted to your notice, and which you must be well aware could be multiplied almost a hundred-fold, I have made no selections from cheap translations of the classics with their manifold obscenities . . . nor from popular versions of foreign authors, whose indecency surpasses anything contained in the English versions of "Nana" and "The Soil," and who, unlike

M. Zola, exhibit no moral tendency whatever in their writings. . . . The Temperance cause never before found so potential an advocate as M. Zola proved himself to be in "L'Assonimoir." A great writer who has exercised the wide influence on contemporary literature that M. Zola has done, whose works have been rendered into all the principal European languages, and who commands a larger audience than any previous author has ever before secured, is not to be extinguished by having recourse to the old form of legal condemnation, and especially at the bidding of a